



WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS

State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development
Office of Economic Advisors

FOR NORTHWEST WISCONSIN COUNTIES

ASHLAND, BAYFIELD, BURNETT, DOUGLAS, IRON, PRICE, RUSK, SAWYER, TAYLOR, WASHBURN

March
2005

Unemployment rates climb higher in February

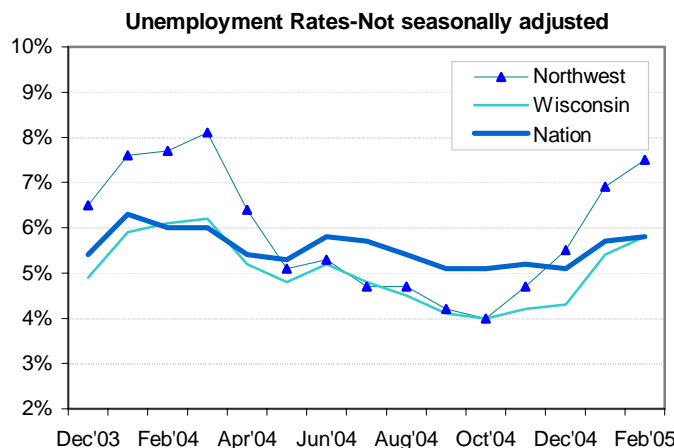
Unemployment rates rose in 68 of Wisconsin's 72 counties in February, including nine of the ten counties in Northwest Wisconsin. The unemployment rate for the northwest region in February was 7.5 percent up from 6.9 percent in January. The one northwest county without a hike in unemployment rate was Douglas where the February

rate of 6.3 percent did not change from January. In Wisconsin the unadjusted unemployment rate in February was 5.8 percent up from 5.4 percent in January while the national unemployment rate rose from 5.7 to 5.8 percent, not seasonally adjusted.

Unemployment rates nearly always rise in February, espe-

cially in the northern counties. Whether or not the rates increase in March is less predictable and depends on the strength of the winter's economy and how quickly laid off construction and other out-door workers are able to return to their jobs. Early reports indicate that the winter months were busy for many tourism-related businesses and most of the counties affected by snow-dependant business posted lower unemployment rates in February 2005 than twelve months earlier.

The current unemployment rate in the northwest region is lower than the 7.7 percent rate of one year ago, but three northwest counties posted higher rates this year. The unemployment rate in Taylor County increased from 7.5 percent in February 2004 to 8.0 percent, in Burnett the rate rose over the year from 7.9 to 8.1 percent, and in Rusk the unemployment rate increased from 9.1 percent in 2004 to 9.2 percent in February 2005. In these counties there



	Dec'03	Jan'04	Feb'04	Dec'04	Jan'05	Feb'05
Northwest	6.5%	7.6%	7.7%	5.5%	6.9%	7.5%
Wisconsin	4.9%	5.9%	6.1%	4.3%	5.4%	5.8%
Nation	5.4%	6.3%	6.0%	5.1%	5.7%	5.8%

Civilian Labor Force Estimates* for Northwest Wisconsin counties: February 2005

	Ashland			Bayfield			Burnett			Douglas			Iron		
	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04
Labor force	10,191	10,224	10,220	9,144	9,171	9,106	8,158	8,138	8,299	23,686	23,757	23,565	4,346	4,365	4,394
Employed	9,554	9,642	9,498	8,418	8,497	8,370	7,499	7,544	7,642	22,198	22,264	21,949	3,982	4,048	4,037
Unemployed	637	582	722	726	674	736	659	594	657	1,488	1,493	1,616	364	317	357
% unemployed	6.3	5.7	7.1	7.9	7.3	8.1	8.1	7.3	7.9	6.3	6.3	6.9	8.4	7.3	8.4

	Price			Rusk			Sawyer			Taylor			Washburn		
	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04
Labor force	8,816	8,861	8,627	7,534	7,410	7,723	8,499	8,557	8,535	11,089	11,093	11,436	8,065	8,054	8,213
Employed	8,342	8,440	8,101	6,842	6,766	7,020	7,720	7,846	7,746	10,204	10,256	10,582	7,346	7,433	7,478
Unemployed	474	421	526	692	644	703	779	711	789	885	837	854	719	621	735
% unemployed	5.4	4.8	6.1	9.2	8.7	9.1	9.2	8.3	9.2	8.0	7.5	7.5	8.9	7.7	8.9

* not seasonally adjusted

Industry Employment Estimates for Northwest Wisconsin: Current month - February 2005

(Employment in thousands)	Ashland			Bayfield			Burnett			Douglas			Iron		
	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04
Total Nonfarm	8.8	8.9	8.6	3.8	3.8	3.7	4.9	4.9	4.9	17.4	17.3	17.6	2.2	2.2	2.2
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.2
Manufacturing	1.2	1.2	1.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.3	0.3	0.3
Trade	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.6	2.9	2.9	2.9	0.4	0.4	0.4
Transportation & Utilities	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	2.2	2.2	2.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Financial Activities	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1
Education & Health Services	1.8	1.8	1.8	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.7	0.7	2.0	2.0	2.0	0.3	0.3	0.3
Leisure & Hospitality	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.5	2.1	2.1	2.1	0.4	0.4	0.4
Info, Prof/Bus.Srv, Othr Srv.	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.4	2.8	2.8	3.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total Government	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	3.2	3.0	3.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
	Price			Rusk			Sawyer			Taylor			Washburn		
	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04	Feb '05	Jan '05	Feb '04
Total Nonfarm	6.9	7.0	6.5	5.7	5.6	5.6	6.6	6.7	6.5	9.1	9.2	9.1	5.9	5.9	5.9
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Manufacturing	2.6	2.6	2.3	1.9	1.9	1.9	0.4	0.4	0.4	2.8	2.8	2.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
Trade	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.6	0.6	0.5	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.3	0.9	1.0	0.9
Transportation & Utilities	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2
Financial Activities	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Education & Health Services	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	0.9
Leisure & Hospitality	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6
Info, Prof/Bus.Srv, Othr Srv.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.8	0.7	1.5	1.5	1.3	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total Government	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.3	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.4	1.4

Current month preliminary. Estimates based on March 2004 benchmark. Summing from unrounded numbers.

is a smaller labor force than one year earlier due to a reduction in the number of employed residents and that increased the percent of unemployed in the labor force.

Three counties reported no change in unemployment rate from one year ago. In Sawyer County the unemployment rate remained at 9.2 percent, in Washburn County the rate did not change from February 2004 when it was 8.9 percent, and, in Iron County, the current rate of 8.4 percent matched the rate of one year earlier. Four Northwest Wisconsin counties posted lower rates from one year ago. Ashland County's unemployment rate dropped from 7.1 to 6.3 percent, Bayfield County's rate declined from 8.1 to 7.9 percent, the Douglas County rate dropped from 6.9 to 6.3 percent, and in Price County the rate

declined from 6.1 percent in February 2004 to 5.4 percent in February 2005.

Throughout the region the number of residents with jobs declined in February as employers in nearly every industry reduced their payroll. Total employment dropped from 92,740 in January to 92,100 in February. Even though there were 630 fewer residents with jobs in February the number of unemployed residents increased by only 530 indicating that residents dropped out of the labor force. The total labor force in February in Northwest Wisconsin declined to 99,530.

The number of nonfarm wage and salary jobs declined from 71,400 in January to 71,300 in February. The largest reductions in personnel occurred with employers in construction and trade. Government employment rose during the

month from increases in state government primarily in Douglas County where the return of workers from winter break finally appeared on university payrolls. This increase lags the actual activity because of delayed payroll reporting.

Compared with one year ago, the reverse is true. Government is the only industry group where employment in February 2005 of 15,130 is down 100 from twelve months earlier. All other industry groups show more jobs over the twelve-month period which collectively adds to an increase of 640 jobs in the regional economy since February 2004. The greatest increase in jobs, 180, occurred with education and health care services employers while information, professional and business services employers added 145 jobs during the twelve-month period.



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